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NEWS

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Illinois Department of Insurance receives \$1.4 million federal grant for its Senior Health Insurance Program (SHIP)

Funding to bolster outreach programs targeting Medicare beneficiaries

CHICAGO—April 15, 2010. The Illinois Department of Insurance announced that it has received a \$1.4 million grant from the U.S. Department of Health & Human Services (HHS). The grant, administered through HHS' Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services, will help fund the Department's Senior Health Insurance Program (SHIP), which provides free one-on-one counseling and community based outreach to Medicare-eligible individuals throughout Illinois.

"SHIP is an invaluable resource that helps thousands of Illinoisans navigate the often overwhelming process of Medicare enrollment," said Michael T. McRaith, Director, Illinois Department of Insurance. "SHIP's network of nearly 1,000 volunteers dedicates nearly 300,000 man-hours per year of free counseling for Medicare beneficiaries and their caregivers."

As one of 54 SHIP organizations in the United States and U.S. territories to receive funding, the Illinois program serves nearly 1.5 million residents who are 65 years of age or older on Medicare and about 240,000 more who are disabled and under 65.

SHIP began in 1988 as a means to educate Medicare beneficiaries and their caregivers about Medicare insurance options through a network of community organizations, senior citizen centers, and the media. Today, more than 900 trained SHIP volunteers staff more than 150 sites across Illinois to educate the state's most vulnerable residents about available Medicare insurance options throughout the year.

In addition to the year-round services provided by SHIP volunteers, the Department conducts a series of free, one-on-one counseling sessions throughout the State to assist Medicare-eligible individuals with the Medicare open-enrollment season, which runs from mid-November through December 31 each year.

SHIP is not affiliated with any insurance company and its counselors do not sell or solicit any type of insurance. SHIP volunteers are trained to educate consumers and answer questions about Medicare and other health insurance.

For More Information

For more information about SHIP, including information about SHIP volunteers in your community Illinois, call SHIP toll-free at (800) 548-9034 or visit SHIP's Web site at insurance.illinois.gov/ship.

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